



Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department

2018 Flag Football Rules

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Mecklenburg County Youth Sports Philosophy

To provide an environment for children to learn the fundamentals of sport while emphasizing the importance of teamwork, sportsmanship, physical activity, healthy lifestyle, and fair play is our primary objective.

The three main desired outcomes from participating in our youth sports programs are;

1. Safety
2. Fun
3. Participation development based on;
 - a. Everyone Plays
 - b. Balanced Teams
 - c. Positive Coaching
 - d. Sportsmanship

I. **LEAGUE INFORMATION**

- a. **GENERAL INFORMATION:** The program shall be known as “Mecklenburg County Park & Recreation Department’s Youth Flag Football League”.
- b. **REGISTRATION:** Registration will be held in July and will remain open for a minimum of four (4) weeks. Participants can register at;
 - i. Any MCPRD recreation facility
 - ii. Online at www.parkandrec.com by clicking on the “EParks” logo
 - iii. Specific questions can be directed to the Youth Sports Department at (980) 314-1116 or via email at YouthSports@mecknc.gov
- c. **LENGTH OF SEASON / SCHEDULE:** The sport season is typically eight games. Certain unforeseen situations may be cause for the postponement of games. Youth Sports will make best efforts to reschedule all postponed games, however there is no guarantee that all scheduled games will be played. All teams at or above the 9 year old age group may be eligible for postseason play/tournament.

II. **PLAYING RULES**

- a. **NFL Flag Football Regular Season Rule Book**

All games will be governed by the NFL Flag Regular Season Rule Book and the Mecklenburg County Park & Recreation local rule modifications, as mentioned below. For more information or to view the NGL Flag Regular Season Rule book, please visit; <http://flagcontent.wpengine.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/2017-REGULAR-SEASON-RULE-BOOK.pdf>.
- b. **MECKLENBURG COUNTY PARK & RECREATION YOUTH SPORTS MODIFICATIONS**

MCPRD reserves the right to modify league play rules and policies to accommodate and/or enhance the overall user experience and/or quality of the program. These rules **MUST BE STRICTLY ADHERED TO** by all staff, officials, coaches, teams, participants, parents, and spectators.
- c. **GENERAL RULES OF THE GAME**
 - i. **Starting and Stopping Play:** A pre-game Captains/Coaches meeting will take place about 5 minutes before the start of each game. The “AWAY” team will call the coin toss, with the winner being awarded the choices of starting on offense or defense, which side to defend, or deferring their decision to the beginning of the 2nd half. To begin play, the offensive team will start from their own five (5) yard line and have four (4) plays to cross midfield. Once a team successfully crosses midfield, they will have four (4) plays to score a touchdown. If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession and the new offensive possession will start from their own five (5) year line. All possession, EXCEPT INTERCEPTIONS, will start from the five (5) yard line. Each play will begin with a snap of the ball from the

center to the quarterback. The center may choose to snap the ball between the legs or from the side. Stoppages in play may occur on the following; time-outs, penalties, fouls or infractions, out of bounds and incomplete passes. There are no fumbles. If a fumble should occur, the ball shall be ruled dead at the position of the ball carrier's feet at the time of dispossession.

- ii. **Changing Ends:** Teams will change ends of field at the half.
- iii. **Formations.** The offense MUST have a minimum of one (1) player (the center) and a maximum of four (4) players, on the line of scrimmage, at the snap. Only one player may go in motion parallel to the line of scrimmage (motion towards the line of scrimmage is prohibited). Offensive players (excluding the player legally in motion) MUST come to a complete stop for one (1) second before the snap. Movement by a player who is "set" or in motion towards the line of scrimmage will be considered a "false start".
- iv. **Blocking.** An offensive player may NOT impede the progress of any defensive player by occupying the path of pursuit with a "moving player". It is the responsibility of the offensive "moving player" to avoid contact with the rusher. The offensive player may occupy a specific space as a "stationary player" provided they have both feet planted on the ground and hands are down to the front, side or in back. The rusher is responsible for avoiding contact with a "stationary player". Moving the feet and/or hands in the direction of a rusher, for the purpose of redirecting their path to the quarterback or ball carrier, is prohibited and shall be considered illegal blocking. Offensive players are also prohibited from running immediately in front, beside or behind the ball carrier.
- v. **Scoring.** Touchdowns = 6 points. Point after Touchdown (PAT) = 1 point (5- yard line) or 2 points (12- yard line). Interceptions on PAT will be whistled dead and cannot be returned. Safety = 2 points. A safety occurs when a ball carrier is declared down in his or her end zone.
- vi. **Running the Ball.** The ball is spotted down at the spot of the runner's feet when the flag is pulled. The quarterback cannot advance the ball beyond the line of scrimmage by running with it (quarterback is defined the person who receives the snap). Pitches, laterals and handoffs (single or multiple) are only legal behind the line of scrimmage. Players who receive a handoff may throw the ball down field from behind the line of scrimmage. Runners may NOT leave their feet (i.e. jump, dive, lunge) to avoid a flag pull or to advance the ball. Spinning is allowed, but players may only leave their feet to avoid contact with another player to avoid a flag guarding penalty. "NO RUN ZONES" intended to improve player safety are located five (5) yards from each end zone and five (5) yards on

either side of midfield, are designed to avoid short-yardage power-running situations. Running the ball is prohibited during plays originating in these areas (ages 7-8 & 9-10), but are NOT in effect at the 5-6 age group.

- vii. **Passing and Receiving.** All forward passes, including shovel passes, must be thrown from behind and received beyond the line of scrimmage.
*Please note that forward passes differ from back-field laterals and pitches. The quarterback has a seven (7) second “pass clock” (official’s discretion). If a pass is not thrown within seven (7) seconds, the play will be whistled dead, the down will be consumed and the ball will be returned to the line of scrimmage. All players are eligible to receive passes, including the quarterback (following a pitch, lateral or handoff behind the line of scrimmage). A player MUST have at least one foot in bounds to make a legal catch. In the case of simultaneous possession, possession of the ball will stay with the offensive team. Interceptions can be advanced by the defensive team and will change possession at the spot of last play with a new possession and first down.
- viii. **Rushing the Passer.** Defensive players that rush the passer MUST be a minimum of seven (7) yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped, behind field marking made by the officials to indicate “rush line”. Defensive players are responsible for checking their positioning. Any number of players may rush in the 7-8 & 9-10 age groups, however only one (1) pass rusher is permitted in the 5-6 age group. If a rushing player leaves the “rush line” prior to the snap, he or she may return to the “rush line”, to reset and rush legally. Rush players may attempt to block a pass, however, **CONTACT WITH THE QUARTERBACK IS PROHIBITED**. Players who are not involved the rush may defend from the line of scrimmage. Once the ball has been handed off, pitched or lateraled, all defensive players are eligible to proceed with pursuit of the ball beyond the line of scrimmage and into the backfield.
- ix. **Flag Pulling.** A legal flag pull takes place when a ball carrier is in full possession of the ball. Defensive players may NOT intentionally pull off the flag(s) of any player(s) who are NOT in possession of the ball. Defensive may NOT dive, trip, tackle, hold or run through the ball carrier when pulling flags. Stripping or attempting to strip the offensive player of the ball is illegal (there is no change of possession on a fumble). A player shall be considered down when their flag falls off inadvertently. Flag guarding, any attempt by the offensive player to obstruct the defensive player’s access to the flag through stiff arming, dropping the head, hand, arm, or shoulder and covering up the flag with the jersey, is illegal.
- x. **Substitutions.** Can be made following the dead ball situations;
 - 1. Ball carrier flag is pulled

2. Ball carriers flag falls off
 3. Ball carrier steps out of bounds
 4. Touchdown or safety is scored
 5. Ball carrier's knee is down
 6. An incomplete pass is thrown
- xi. **Penalties.** The game officials will call all penalties. Incidental contact resulting from the normal run of play is to be evaluated and judged, allowed or penalized, at the discretion of the official. All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage (LOS), except noted spot fouls. Penalties will be assessed at half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal. Only the Head Coach may address the officials, but ONLY for rule interpretation or clarification. Players are prohibited from questioning judgement calls or protesting any call with the game officials. Games may NOT end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense declines the penalty. Coaches reserve the right to decline penalties called on behalf or in favor of their team.
1. **Defensive Penalties.** Line of Scrimmage (LOS) vs. Spot Foul (yardage loss or gain is assessed from the spot of the penalty and not the LOS).
 - a. **Offside.** LOS plus five (5) yards & automatic first down
 - b. **Pass Interference.** Spot Foul & automatic first down
 - c. **Holding.** Spot Foul & automatic first down
 - d. **Illegal Flag Pull.** LOS plus five (5) yards & automatic first down
 - e. **Illegal Rush.** LOS plus five (5) yards & automatic first down
 - f. **Roughing the Passer.** LOS plus ten (10) yards & automatic first down
 - g. **Stripping.** Spot Foul plus ten (10) yards & automatic first down
 - h. **Unnecessary Roughness.** Spot Foul plus ten (10) yards & automatic first down
 2. **Offensive Penalties.** Line of Scrimmage (LOS) vs. Spot Foul (yardage loss or gain is assessed from the spot of the penalty and not the LOS).
 - a. **False Start.** LOS minus five (5) yards & loss of down
 - b. **Illegal Motion.** LOS minus five (5) yards & loss of down
 - c. **Pass Interference.** LOS minus five (5) yards & loss of down
 - d. **Illegal Forward Pass.** LOS minus five (5) yards & loss of down
 - e. **Illegal Flag Pull.** LOS minus five (5) yards & loss of down
 - f. **Delay of Game.** LOS minus five (5) yards & loss of down

- g. **Screening, Blocking, or Running with the Ball Carrier.** LOS minus five (5) yards & loss of down
- h. **Charging.** Spot Foul minus ten (10) yards & loss of down
- i. **Flag Guarding.** Spot Foul minus ten (10) yards & loss of down
- j. **Unnecessary Roughness.** Spot Foul minus ten (10) yards & loss of down

III. MCPRD POLICIES & PROCEDEURES

- a. **Scoring.** Score will NOT be kept at the 5-6 & 7-8 Instructional Divisions. Score will be kept at the 9-10 Recreational Division and older age classifications. Game officials will report scores to the site supervisor immediately following each game.
 - i. **Mercy Rule.** When a team at the 9-10 or older age classifications takes a twenty-one (21) point lead it will be required to pass on each offensive snap as running plays will be prohibited until the leads drops below twenty-one (21) points.
- b. **Coaches.** Each team's Head Coach must be certified by NYSCA.
- c. **Bench / Sideline Personnel.** A maximum of three (3) bench personnel (coaches or team manager) per team will be permitted in the bench area. For the 9-10 age classification and higher, this may include a statistician. All other team personnel MUST remain inside the designated spectator area. Each approved volunteer will be issued an ID badge which MUST be visible to MCPRD game operations staff on game days.
- d. **Warm-up.** On field warm-up time will NOT be scheduled. Teams may utilize the field for warm-up time once the previous game has concluded and they have been directed by game operations staff to take the field. Games will begin PROMPTLY at their scheduled start time. MCPRD staff shall determine grace period before ruling forfeit.
- e. **Official Time Clock.** All officials shall check with staff to verify and synchronize time before any decisions are made with regards to forfeits, grace periods, etc. Once each game has begun, official timing shall be kept by the field official. Clock stoppages will occur only in the event of an injury or extenuating circumstances.
- f. **Overtime.** During the regular season, when recreational division games have a tied score at the end of regulation time, an overtime period will be played. The "HOME TEAM" shall have first possession and the "AWAY TEAM" shall choose which end they defend. Each team will begin their possession on the twelve (12) yard line. Teams will alternate possessions for two drives each, if necessary. If the score remains tied after the second series of drives for each team, "Sudden Death" overtime will begin with a coin toss to determine possession, conducted

by the game official. Possessions will begin at the twelve (12) yard line and the first team to score points will be determined the winner.

- g. **Game Scheduling & Make-Ups.** MCPRD reserves the right to postpone scheduled games due to inclement weather or unsafe field conditions at their discretion. However, Youth Sports will make best efforts to reschedule all postponed games when possible, even though that cannot be guaranteed.
- h. **Inclement Weather Hotline.** In the event of INCLEMENT WEATHER, information related to the status of scheduled games can be heard at 704-432-3834. Every effort will be made to update the hotline by 4pm of weekdays and 8am on weekends. Recreation Centers that host teams and games can also be contacted for additional information and updates.
- i. **ADA Compliance.** To comply with The American Disabilities Act, league rules may be further modified to include participants. An “ADA Exception Form” must be submitted to Karla Gray, Director Therapeutic Division and the Youth Sports Department Staff for approval and verification of any rule modifications.
- j. **Equipment.** Each team will provide a minimum of one appropriately sized official game ball per game. Rubber (molded) cleats, turf or athletic shoes are permitted. Hard plastic or metal cleats are prohibited.
- k. **Personal Safety Equipment.** Each flag football participant is **REQUIRED** to wear a protective mouthpiece during practice and game play. Participants are also required to wear a flag belt during game play. It is STRONGLY RECOMMENDED that participants wear an athletic supporter, cup, groin pad or combination of those items during all practice and game participation to decrease the potential for injury.
- l. **Uniforms.** During competition, all teams are required to wear uniforms consisting of the same or similar colored jerseys or shirt. Jerseys or shirts should be printed with a number on the back that are at least six (6) inches in height, to identify individual players. Under shirts and pants may be worn due to seasonal weather extremes as needed. Temporary uniform modifications are prohibited. **Jerseys/shirts MUST BE tucked in and remain tucked in as to not interfere with the exposed flags on their belt.**
- m. **Team PHOTO ID SHEET.** All 9-10 and older teams MUST submit an official Team Photo ID Sheet that is verified by the Facility Manager of the corresponding recreation center or the athletic director of outside or independent organizations admitted into the league, PRIOR TO PLAYING THE FIRST GAME OF THE SEASON. A headshot (photo), full name, and date of birth MUST be stated for each player on the ID sheet / roster. A copy of the official Team Photo ID Sheet MUST Be made available by the head coach or team manager 10 minutes prior to the start of each game and anytime at the request of Youth Sports staff.

- n. **Birth Certificates.** All players are required to provide a valid birth certificate or other approved legal document showing proof of age, which MUST be verified by CRC staff to establish eligibility.
- o. **Forfeits.** At the 9-10 age classification and higher, each team MUST be ready to play with the minimum required number of players on site at their scheduled game time. In the event a team is unable to produce the minimum number of players to begin the game, the result is a forfeit with a reported score of 28-0 for the winning team. In the event both teams are unable to produce the required minimum number of players to begin the game, both teams will receive a loss in the recorded standings with a recorded score of 28-28 for that game. If any team forfeits three (3) games in a season, they will be subject to dismissal from the league, pending review by Youth Sports and/or the Focus Team Group. MCPRD reserves the right to overrule an official's decision as it relates to forfeits, when extenuating circumstances may have caused the forfeit. All CRCs and Head Coaches should make best effort to inform their local Facility Manager and/or Youth Sports with as much notice as possible when they know they cannot field a team.
- p. **Volunteer Coaches.** ALL MCPRD volunteer coaches MUST complete the following requirements prior to assuming their role;
 - i. Each volunteer MUST apply and receive approval as a youth sports coach through the online process
 - ii. Each coach MUST read, acknowledge, sign, and adhere to the MCPRD Coach's Code of Conduct
 - iii. Each Head Coach will be required to complete training and receive certification through The National Alliance of Youth Sports (NAYS). The online training can be scheduled by staff at the respective CRC. Although only the Head Coach is required, Youth Sports recommends all coaches receive training and certification.
 - iv. MCPRD strongly recommends that ALL coaches attend a preseason coaching meeting
 - v. Each coach MUST thoroughly understand and adhere to playing rules, MCPRD Code of Ethics and Conduct and support the overall philosophy of the Youth Sports Department.
- q. **Player Eligibility.** Participants can play on only one (1) team within a MCPRD program. Any player listed on multiple rosters or participating on multiple teams will be found ineligible immediately. Any participants or teams found to be in violation of this rule are subject to forcible forfeit, suspension and/or further supplemental discipline.

All Teams, participants, parents, spectators, officials, staff, and coaches MUST abide by all MCPRD rules and policies, which govern participation in the league's and programs under its jurisdiction.

IV. AGE CLASSIFICATIONS

MCPRD Youth Sports will offer the following age groups for the 2018 Fall Soccer Season;

1. CO-ED Instructional Division 5-6 years of age
 2. CO-ED Instructional Division 7-8 years of age
 3. CO-ED Recreational Division 9-10 years of age
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- a. **Cut Off Date.** Age classifications are determined by the participant's calculated age as of the first day of the month in which the season starts, September 1, 2018.
 - b. **Play Up Policy.** Participants registering for MCPRD programs are strongly recommended to play within their corresponding pre-determined age classification according to their chronological age as determined as of the "cut off" date. In the event a parent or guardian feels that their child would benefit greatly from participating at a higher age classification, the department may acknowledge and consider the request and will accommodate any approved request upon completion of the "Play Up Form". Players may "play up" by only one (1) year, to the next age classification, when applicable. A Play Up Release of Liability and Assumption Risk document will need to be signed by a legal guardian, filed at the corresponding CRC, with a copy submitted to Youth Sports.
 - c. **Must Play Rule.** Coaches MUST monitor and manage the playing time of ALL participants on their respective team. Maximum participation for ALL is encouraged. ALL divisions will abide by the "MUST PLAY RULE".
 - i. **Instructional players MUST play a minimum of 1 half or 2 quarters**
 - ii. **Recreational players MUST play a minimum of 1 half or 2 quarters**
 - d. **Tournament Play.** The 9-10 Recreational Division will have a County-Wide Playoff Tournament at the end of the regular season. Age classifications below 10U will not be eligible for tournament or post-season play.
 - a. **Number of Teams Selected.** The number of teams that qualify for post-season play at the 9-10 and up age classifications will be determined on a sliding scale, based on the number of teams in each league, as follows;

Regular Season	County-Wide Tournament
# Teams Participating	# of Teams that Qualify
9+ Teams	Top 6 Teams
7-8 Teams	Top 5 Teams
4-6 Teams	Top 4 Teams

- b. **Team Selection.** The top team of each league based on the final regular season standings will advance to the county-wide tournament. Seedings will be determined based on final regular season standings. In the event of a tie, tournament seedings will be determined by the following tie-breakers;
- Head to Head Record
 - Fewest number of forfeits
 - Fewest defensive points allowed head to head
 - Fewest defensive points allowed for the regular season
 - Coin toss

V. AGE SPECIFIC SPECIFICATIONS

Flag Football	5-6 Year Old	7-8 Year Old	9-10 Year Old
Division	Instructional	Instructional	Recreational
Field Dimensions	Approx. 30w x 70l yds	Approx. 30w x 70l yds	Approx. 30w x 70l yds
Ball Size	Pee Wee	Pee Wee	Junior
Length of Game	2 x 20-minute Halfs	2 x 20-minute Halfs	2 x 20-minute Halfs
Clock	Running	Running	Running
Stops For	Timeouts, ref discretion	Timeouts, ref discretion	Timeouts, Last 2 Mins
Timeouts	1 (60) & 1 (30)/half/team	1 (60) & 1 (30)/half/team	1 (60) & 1 (30)/half/team

# Players on Field	6	5	5
Roster Minimum	8	8	8
Roster Maximum	12	12	12

* A minimum total of five (5) players MUST be present to start a recreation division game

VI. PROTESTS.

- a. **Protests WILL NOT be honored.**
- b. **Conflict Resolution & Chain of Command.** Should a conflict arise AND no decision is rendered by the onsite athletic staff, then the Focus Team Group will immediately schedule a meeting or conference call to make a final ruling. Order of decision making;
 - i. **Game Officials.** Govern play on the field.
 - ii. **MCPRD Staff.** Provide onsite administrative checkpoints for rule modifications, paperwork, and scorekeeping.
 - iii. **Youth Sports Development Staff.** Oversees league administration.

VII. CODE OF CONDUCT

***MCPRD POSSESSES A ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY FOR COACHES, PARTICIPANTS, PARENTS AND SPECTATORS IN REGARDS TO INAPPROPRIATE CONDUCT AND RESERVES THE RIGHT TO ASSESS SUSPENSIONS AND/OR PROHIBIT ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION AT THEIR DISCRETION. PARENTS OF PARTICIPANTS MUST ATTEND THE PARENT'S ASSOCIATION FOR YOUTH SPORTS (PAYS) TRAINING COURSE OFFERED AT THEIR RESPECTIVE RECREATION CENTER PRIOR TO BEGINNING THE SEASON. IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN SAFETY, APPROPRIATE CONDUCT AND OVERALL PROGRAM INTEGRITY. EACH COACH, PARTICIPANT, PARENT AND SPECTATOR WILL BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE FOR THE FOLLOWING CONDUCT STANDARDS:**

A. **INAPPROPRIATE COMMUNICATION WITH OFFICIALS:**

***Questioning/Arguing judgment calls made by officials is STRICTLY PROHIBITED.**

1. ONLY HEAD COACHES will be permitted to consult with the OFFICIAL regarding rule clarification ONLY and this MUST ONLY BE DONE IN A SPORTSMANLIKE MANNER. It is in the best interest of head coaches to approach officials in a courteous manner and in the presence of staff whenever possible.
2. Arguing/disputing judgment calls is strictly prohibited and will be viewed as verbal abuse. Coaches, participants and/or spectators are not permitted to badger, criticize, harass or mock officials.

B. **INTIMIDATION, COMMUNICATING THREATS, VERBAL ABUSE & BULLYING:**

1. Coaches, participants, parents and spectators may not attempt to intimidate, threaten, verbally abuse or engage in a verbal confrontation of any sort with any other coaches, participants, parents, spectators, Park and Recreation staff or officials.
2. Coaches, participants, parents and spectators may not make physical contact of any kind with any other coaches, participants, parents, spectators, Park and Recreation staff or officials.

C. POOR SPORTSMANSHIP & INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR:

1. Any and all team-affiliated persons (coaches, participants, parents and spectators) must conduct themselves in a sportsmanlike manner when involved in any Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department's youth athletic programs. This rule applies to conduct on all MECKLENBURG COUNTY PARK PROPERTY before, during, and after scheduled events.

NOTE: If spectators and/or affiliated persons' conduct become overly unruly & unsportsmanlike during the course of the game, the MCPRD staff & game officials reserve the authority to empty the facility & allow only coaches & players to remain, in the effort to finish game play.

D. ALCOHOL/ILLEGAL SUBSTANCES:

1. The possession of, use of and/or participation while under the influence of alcohol or any other illegal substance is strictly prohibited.

A. EJECTIONS:

Any coaches, participants or spectators who are ejected from a youth sports program, activity or event will be automatically ineligible to coach, participate and/or spectate until such time that they are notified by the Youth Sports Staff (See F. Incident Procedures below).

B. INCIDENT PROCEDURES:

Individuals reported to be ejected or in violation of the Conduct of Conduct will be notified of an immediate temporary suspension from the program and asked to provide a written statement regarding the details of the incident in question, as well as their involvement or participation in said incident no later than 5:00pm of the following Tuesday to a Youth Sports staff member at YouthSports@MecklenburgCountyNC.gov. Failure to provide a written statement is viewed as an admission of guilt.

VIII. SUSPENSIONS

For more information on suspensions, please refer to the Sports Suspension Policy for Youth Sports.

For more information about MCPRD Youth Sports programs, please contact your nearest Recreation Center, or Youth Sports Department at (980) 314-1116 or via email at youthsports@mcknc.gov.

Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department encourages and promotes inclusive leisure experiences in all programs, activities and sports leagues. Inclusive leisure experiences encourage and enhance opportunities for individuals of varying abilities to participate and interact in life activities together with dignity. It also provides an environment that promotes and fosters physical, social, and psychological inclusion of people with diverse experiences and skill levels. Inclusion enhances individual' potential for full and active participation in leisure activities and experiences.



